

non-priority code words.

17. A method according to [one of the claims 1 - 15] claim 1, wherein the code words which represent coded spectral values are arranged in the raster of the bit stream independently of the frequency of the corresponding spectral values.
18. A method according to claim 17, wherein information regarding the correspondence between the frequency and the code word is inserted in the bit stream as side information when the frequency independent distribution is not predetermined.
19. A method according to [one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein only each n-th code word of the priority code words is arranged in the raster of the bit stream while the remaining priority code words and non-priority code words are not aligned with raster points.
20. A method according to [one of the preceding claims] claim 1, wherein the spectral values are quantized prior to coding taking the psychoacoustic model into account.
21. A device for coding an audio signal to obtain a coded bit stream, comprising:
  - (a) a unit for transforming a block of discrete-time samples of the audio signal into the frequency domain to obtain a block of spectral values which represent the audio signal;
  - (b) a unit for coding the spectral values with a code table having a limited number of code words of different lengths to obtain spectral values coded with code

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words, the length of a code word which is assigned to a spectral value generally being that much shorter the higher the probability of occurrence of the spectral value is;

- (c) a unit for determining a raster for the coded bit stream where the raster has equidistant raster points (10, 12, 14) and where the separation (D1) of the raster points depends on the code table; [and]
- (d) defining priority code words among the code words, those code words which represent spectral values which are psychoacoustically important compared to other spectral values being defined as priority code words; and
- (e) a unit for positioning the priority code words [, which represent particular spectral values which are psychoacoustically important compared to other spectral values,] in the raster so that the start of [each priority code word coincides with a raster point] a priority code word which represents a spectral value of the block of spectral values coincides with one raster point and the start of another priority code word which represents another spectral value of the block of spectral values coincides with another raster point.

22. A device according to claim 21 [for coding an audio signal to obtain a coded bit stream, comprising:

a unit for transforming discrete-time samples of the audio signal into the frequency domain to obtain spectral values which represent the audio signal;]

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a unit for grouping the spectral values into adjacent spectral sections, each spectral section having at least one spectral value;

a unit for assigning at least two different code tables from a predetermined number of code tables to two different spectral sections, a spectral section having assigned to it that code table which is best suited for coding the spectral values in the spectral section;

where the unit for coding is designed to code the spectral values from the spectral sections with the code table which is assigned to the corresponding spectral section, [the length of a code word which is assigned to a spectral value being in general that much shorter the higher the probability of occurrence of the spectral value is;]

where the [a] unit for specifying is designed to specify a raster for the coded bit stream such that the raster has at least two groups of raster points [(10, 12, 14 and 14, 16, 18)], such that the raster points of each group are spaced equidistantly from one another and such that the raster point distance [(D1 or D2)] of each group depends on an appropriate code table from among the at least two different code tables. [; and

a unit for positioning priority code words, which represent certain spectral values which are psychoacoustically important compared to other spectral values, in the raster so that the start of each priority code word of each code table coincides with a raster point (10, 12, 14 or 14, 16, 18) in the corresponding group of raster points.]

23. A method for decoding a bit stream representing a coded audio signal, where the coded bit stream contains code